

Ellipsis

Volume 45

Article 14

2018

Brother Malcolm

John Warner Smith 9331177
Southern University

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Recommended Citation

Smith, John Warner 9331177 (2018) "Brother Malcolm," *Ellipsis*: Vol. 45 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/ellipsis/vol45/iss1/14>

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JOHN WARNER SMITH

Brother Malcolm

If I have any regret, it's that I didn't make things right
between us, didn't tell you how much you meant to me
and how sorry I was that our friendship ended.

Since that day in June of 1962, when Sam Saxon drove
Rudy and me to Detroit to a Muslim rally to hear
the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and meet you,

I wanted to learn more about the Muslim religion.

Like a big brother, you took me under your wing
and counseled me. You were a flame of fire

that lit my path to truth about the black man's power
to control his own destiny and the white man's desire
to permanently keep the black man in bondage.

Before meeting you, I had never heard a black man
speak his mind with such boldness, without fear.

I always had the utmost respect for your courage
to stand up for what is right, and for your integrity
and wisdom. Most of all, you believed in me

when few people did. You were one of the few
at ringside at my first Liston fight who believed
I could win, because you knew that Allah
had already ordained it. You were a true friend
and mentor, and for that I will always be grateful.
The last time we spoke, meeting accidentally in Ghana
outside the hotel, you called my name, ready
to embrace and talk, but I spoke meanly, cold as ice,
angry because you had called Allah's messenger,
the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, a fraud,
and because you turned away from the truth
that had set you free. In my mind and heart,
you were a hypocrite and the enemy.
Blinded by loyalty to the Nation of Islam, I was
still bitter toward you by the time of your death,
unable to see that you, more than anyone,
helped me to find Allah's purpose in my life.
In the end, we have crossed the same sands
to kneel at the same altar and say

the same prayers. In true Islam, we are brothers.

Until we meet again, As-Salaam-Alaikum,
my friend. May the peace of God be with you.

Love,

Muhammad